

Attorney's Docket: 1999DE507  
Serial No.: 10/070,071  
Art Unit: 1623

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the depolymerization of hot water-coagulable cellulose ethers by hydrolytic degradation by means of acids, wherein the degradation is carried out at a temperature above the cloud point of the cellulose ether as concentrated aqueous slurry, and in addition at least one oxidizing agent is added to the concentrated aqueous slurry in an amount of between 0.05 and 5% by weight, before, during and/or after the depolymerization in acidic or neutral medium.
2. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein methyl-, ethyl-, propyl-, hydroxyethylmethyl-, hydroxypropylmethyl-, ethylhydroxyethyl- or ethylmethylcellulose is employed as cellulose ether.
3. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1 or 2, wherein the degraded cellulose ether has a Höppler viscosity, measured as 2.0% solution (absolutely dry) in water at 20°C, of ≤ 50 mPas.
4. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein mineral acids and/or organic acids are employed as acids.
5. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 4, wherein hydrochloric, sulfuric, nitric and/or phosphoric acids are employed as mineral acids.
6. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein the ratio of water to cellulose ether does not exceed 10:1 by weight.
7. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein peroxy compounds, perborates, sodium chlorite, halogens and/or halogen oxides are employed as the at least one oxidizing agent.

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8. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 7, wherein hydrogen peroxide is employed as the at least one oxidizing agent.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 1, wherein after the depolymerization, the degraded cellulose ether is washed with at least one aqueous solution of a basic salt at a temperature above the cloud point of the degraded cellulose ether in order to adjust the aqueous solution of the degraded cellulose ether to a pH in the range from 5.5 to 8.0.

11. (Previously Presented) The process as claimed in claim 10, wherein sodium carbonate, sodium bicarbonate, sodium sulfate and/or sodium bisulfate is employed as the salt.

12. (Previously Presented) A methylhydroxypropylcellulose with a Höppler viscosity, measured as 2.0% solution (absolutely dry) in water at 20°C of  $\leq$  50 mPas, obtainable by a process as claimed in claim 1.

13. (Previously Presented) A methylhydroxypropylcellulose with a Höppler viscosity, measured as 2.0% solution (absolutely dry) in water at 20°C, of  $\leq$  50 mPas, wherein the methylhydroxypropylcellulose has a whiteness, determined by measuring the reflectance in % at 447 nm against a white standard (enamel white standard; reflectance setting = 71.5%), which is above 50%, with a particle size distribution in which the proportion of particles with a size of  $<$  125  $\mu$ m does not exceed 50%.

14. (Previously Presented) A methylhydroxypropylcellulose as claimed in claim 13, with a Höppler viscosity of from 5 to 50 mPas, wherein the whiteness, determined by

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measuring the reflectance in % at 447 nm against a white standard (enamel white standard; reflectance setting = 71.5%), is above 60%.

15. (Previously Presented) A methylhydroxypropylcellulose as claimed in claim 13 or 14, wherein the methylhydroxypropylcellulose has a salt content of less than 0.4% by weight.

16. (Previously Presented) A methylhydroxypropylcellulose as claimed in claim 13, wherein the methylhydroxypropylcellulose has a content of methoxy groups in the range from 28 to 32% by weight and a content of hydroxypropyl groups in the range from 5 to 9% by weight.

17. (Previously Presented) A coated composition having a coating, wherein coating comprises the methylhydroxypropylcellulose as claimed in claim 13, and wherein the composition is selected from pharmaceuticals and seeds.

18. (Previously Presented) A composition comprising the methylhydroxypropylcellulose as claimed in claim 13, wherein the composition is selected from the group consisting of cosmetics, foodstuffs and suspension polymerization compositions.